NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES D

CUSSETA ROAD AREA

COLUMBUS • GEORGIA

NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES: CUSSETA ROAD AREA

Prepared By Planning Division
Department of Community Development
Columbus, Georgia

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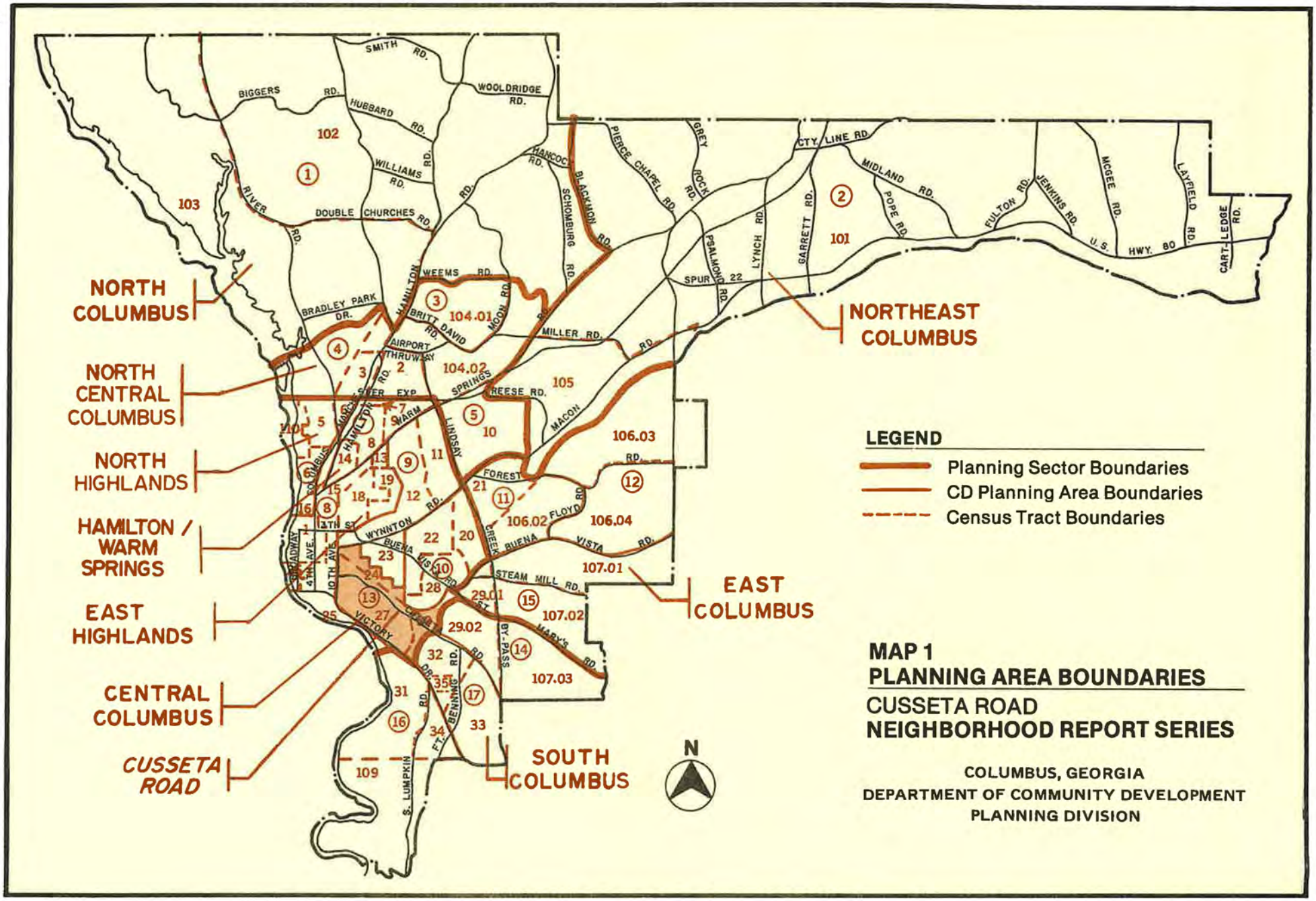

NORTH COLUMBUS
NORTH CENTRAL COLUMBUS
NORTH HIGHLANDS
HAMILTON / WARM SPRINGS
EAST HIGHLANDS
CENTRAL COLUMBUS
CUSSETA ROAD
SOUTH COLUMBUS
EAST COLUMBUS
NORTHEAST COLUMBUS
LEGEND
Planning Sector Boundaries
CD Planning Area Boundaries
Census Tract Boundaries
N
MAP 1
PLANNING AREA BOUNDARIES
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING DIVISION

Introduction

This report is part of the neighborhood analysis program being carried out for the City of Columbus by the Planning Division of the Department of Community Development. The program has several objectives:

- to update and supplement the data in previous neighborhood analyses in order to determine area trends;

- to assess the effect on particular neighborhoods of the recommendations contained in the *Land Use Plan* and specific redevelopment plans;

- to identify and address issues concerned with planning and future development in the neighborhoods of Columbus; and,

- to direct public policy and action to preserve and improve neighborhood areas.

The Cusseta Road neighborhood was chosen for study because data from the 1980 Census indicate continuing economic decline in the area. The following report outlines existing conditions and makes recommendations for future public policy and actions.

Location

The location of the Cusseta Road neighborhood is shown on Map 1. The area is bounded on the west by 10th Avenue; on the south by Victory Drive; on the east by Bull Creek; and on the north by 12th Street, Midway Drive, Buena Vista Road, Wynnton Road, Oakview Avenue, 9th Street, Magnolia Avenue, Ragland Street, Ragland Court, Palmetto Avenue, Collier Street, Talley Avenue, Murray Street, Shepherd Drive, Brown Avenue, and the Central of Georgia Railroad Tracks. The boundaries of the neighborhood follow census tract boundaries and include tracts 24, 27, and 30.

History

The Cusseta Road neighborhood was outside the original town plat of Columbus, laying to the east of the Commons land. This flat low-lying land is criss-crossed by several creeks and was subject to flooding. Thus, as the town expanded, suburbs grew up on the hills to the north where the climate was considered healthier. In the mid-1800's, the coming of the railroad further isolated this area. It lay to the east of the rail yards and the main east-west tracks were constructed through the relatively undeveloped land.

After the Civil War, free blacks who crowded into Columbus settled mainly in the section known as "The Bottoms". This section was located between Weracoba Creek and the hill upon which the town of Wynnton was built. The shanty town which grew up in the late 1800's remained until the late 1950's.

The main impetus for development of this neighborhood came from the establishment of Fort Benning, and in particular the growth of the base during the late 1930's and 1940's. The

influx of thousands of troops caused a severe shortage of housing throughout Columbus. In response to the need for housing, many new subdivisions were platted during the 1940's; Summerfield, Winterfield, Eastview, and Andrews Woods were some of the new housing areas begun within the neighborhood. By 1949, the area had developed into suburbs of moderately-priced homes and was annexed by the City of Columbus.

In the 1950's and 1960's, the configuration of the Bottoms area was changed substantially by two major urban renewal projects. The first project, Theo McGee, cleared over 700 structures from 107 acres north of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and east of 10th Avenue. The structures demolished were for the most part substandard, overcrowded housing units. The Columbus Housing Authority relocated all the residents and sold the land for housing and neighborhood commercial activities, reserving a section for a new park. A new street system was laid out, and more than 300 new housing units were constructed in the area.

The second area of the Cusseta Road neighborhood to be cleared was the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area south of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and east of 10th Avenue. Over 600 structures were demolished on 117 acres, and improvements were made to the channel of Weracoba Creek to alleviate flooding problems. Unlike the earlier Theo McGee project, the cleared land in Weracoba Creek has been designated for industrial use with smaller areas to be developed for commercial and residential uses. Sale and redevelopment of this land has proceeded slowly; several vacant tracts remain.

Outside the urban renewal areas, there has been little new development in the neighborhood in the past twenty years. The large reduction in troop strength at Fort Benning after the Vietnam War relieved the pressure on housing, resulting in a decrease in the number of mobile homes in the area. One large mobile home park was built, and some apartments have been constructed. The land still undeveloped is expected to be used for industrial and commercial activity.

Population

The population in the Cusseta Road neighborhood has decreased by 41% since 1960. Some of the decrease can be attributed to smaller household size. The majority, however, resulted from the demolition of almost 700 housing units under the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Program. Planning Division projections for the year 2005 indicate that the rate of population loss in the neighborhood will moderate, but no reversal of the trend is foreseen.

The other significant change in neighborhood population is a shift in racial composition. In 1970, blacks accounted for 65% of the population; in 1980 they accounted for 81%. Tracts 24 and 27 have been traditional black areas since the late 1800's. Tract 30, however, had been predominately white until the 1970's. Since 1970, the percentage of blacks in this tract has increased from 8% to 69%.

The age distribution in the neighborhood is similar to that of Columbus as a whole. There are more children than city-wide, but the area follows the nationwide trend toward a growing proportion of elderly residents. The percentage of adults under the age of 65 is slightly lower than for the entire city.

FIGURE 1
NEIGHBORHOOD POPULATION
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES

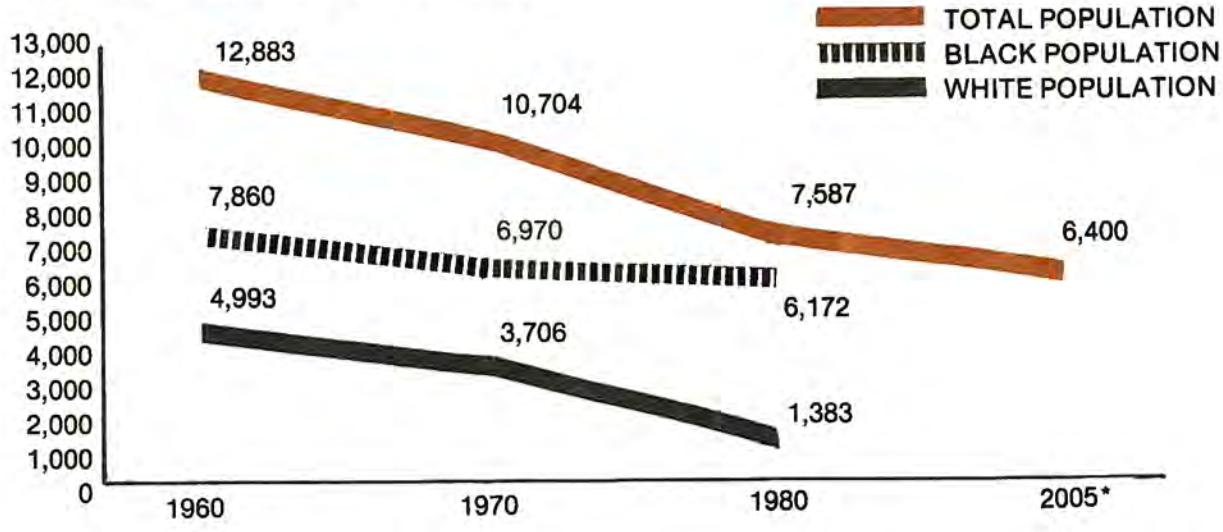
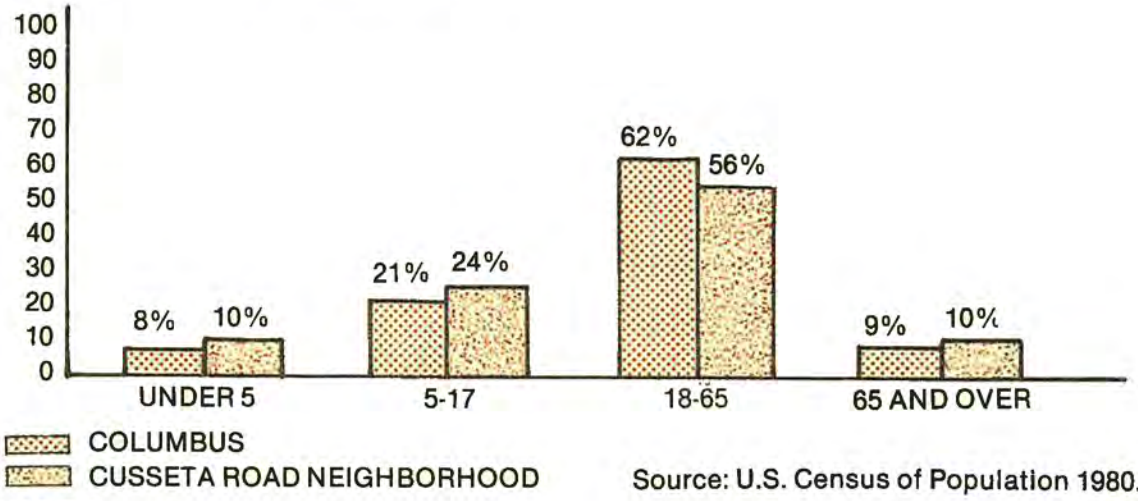
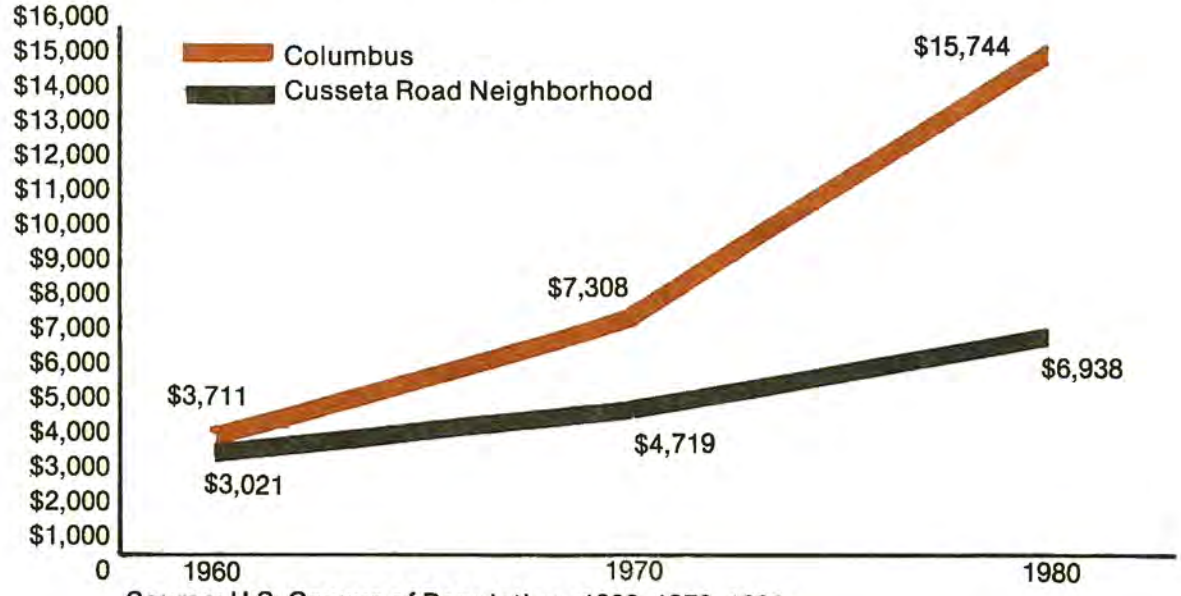


FIGURE 2
AGE OF POPULATION
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



Source: U.S. Census of Population 1980.

FIGURE 3
MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



Source: U.S. Census of Population 1960, 1970, 1980

Income date from the 1980 Census show that the Cusseta Road neighborhood has continued to fall behind the city economically. In 1960 median family income in the area was 80% of the city median. By 1970, it had decreased to 65%, and in 1980 it was only 44% of the city median. There are 860 families below the poverty level, spread through all three census tracts. 25% of all the households within the area receive some form of public assistance income.

The average educational level in the neighborhood is also far below the average for Columbus. City-wide, 61% of the population have completed high school; in the Cusseta Road neighborhood only 36% have achieved this level. The lack of educational attainment is reflected in the employment of the working population, 75% of whom work in unskilled or semi-skilled positions. Professional and managerial positions are held by less than 10% of the residents.

Since 1960, census tract 30 has seen a major change in its population. Twenty years ago, this tract was comparable with the citywide averages for income, education, and racial composition. The 1970 census showed slower growth in population and income than that experienced by the city as a whole, but the area remained well ahead of the rest of the neighborhood. Between 1970 and 1980, however, the substantial shift in racial composition was accompanied by a relative decrease in income levels. Tract 30 is now among the lowest income areas of Columbus.

Housing

The Cusseta Road neighborhood contains a variety of low and moderately priced housing, most of it between 20 and 40 years old. The number of housing units has fluctuated over the past twenty years as losses through urban renewal clearance and replacement through new construction have occured. There was an increase of 300 units between 1960 and 1970 as the Theo McGee area was redeveloped; from 1970 to 1980, there was a decrease of 600 units due to clearance in the Weracoba Creek renewal area. With no further projects planned for the neighborhood, the number of units is expected to remain relatively stable in the future.

Most of the housing units in the neighborhood were built between 1940 and 1970; there has been very little new residential construction over the past ten years. The area of oldest housing is also the area of worst housing conditions. Kendrick Quarters in the southeastern corner of census tract 27 contains shotgun-type houses built around the turn of the century. Many of these have received inadequate maintenance, and some are badly deteriorated. Over the past ten years about fifteen houses have been demolished in this area, and several more are under city order to be demolished or brought up to standard.

Housing throughout the rest of the neighborhood is generally in standard condition. However, there are indications that many units are receiving little or no maintenance. Worn and peeling paint, vehicles parked in yards, and accumulation of junk on porches are common within the area. Fire prevention personnel now working in the neighborhood find violations in about one quarter of the homes visited. The quality of the residential environment is being eroded by the appearance of neglect and the absence of routine maintenance.

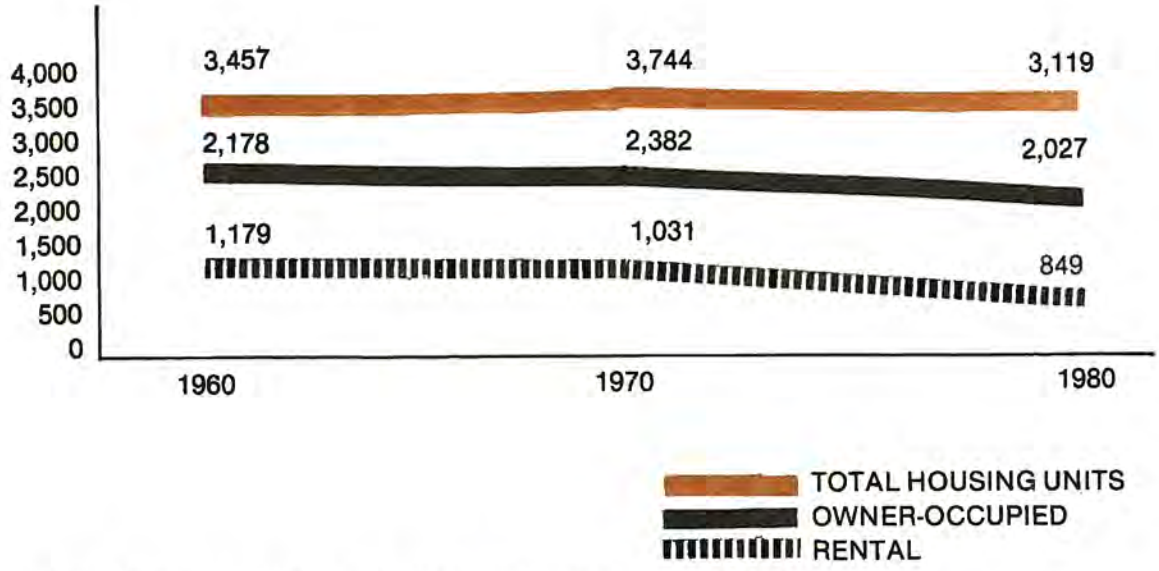
The eastern portion of census tract 27 and all of tract 30 have been designated as housing renewal areas by the Columbus Housing Authority. Such designation makes low- and middle income owners eligible for low- interest or deferred-payment loans for rehabilitation. This program, known as the Columbus Housing Improvement Program (CHIP), has 28 loans outstanding from its revolving fund; however, there are currently no loans from this program within the Cusseta Road neighborhood.

Housing adjacent to Cusseta, North Lumpkin, and Andrews Roads has suffered from its proximity to incompatible commercial uses. Along Cusseta and North Lumpkin Roads, there are junk yards, garages, and marginal or abandoned businesses which receive no maintenance. The commercial development along Andrews Road affects those housing areas which are along the rear of the businesses; no effort has been made to protect residential backyards from

the impact of highway commercial uses.

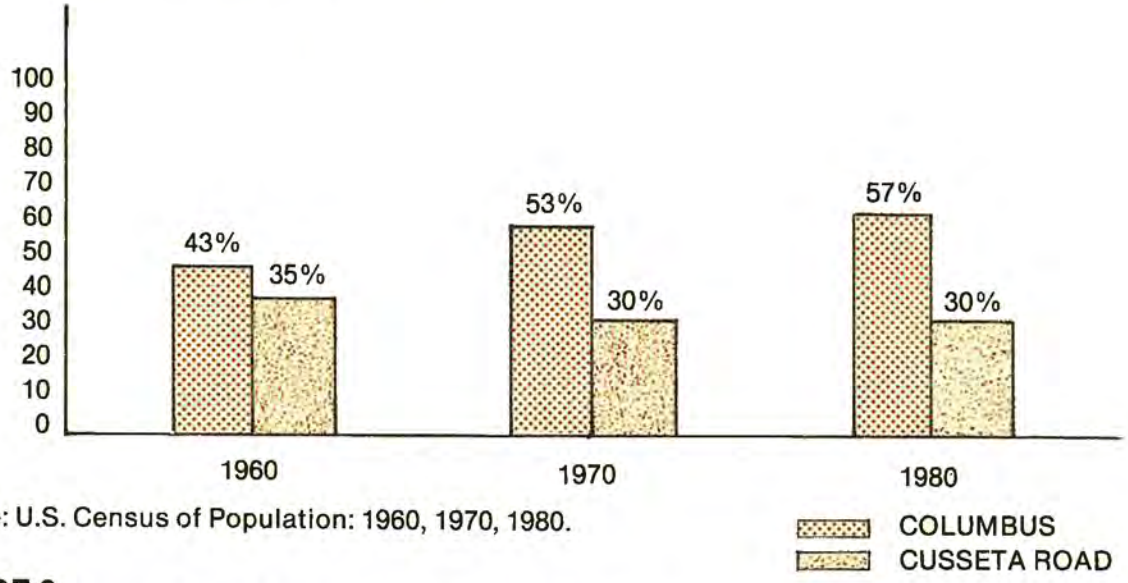
The neighborhood is the location for all or part of four public housing projects operated by the Columbus Housing Authority. The oldest of these, Warren Williams Homes, occupies 17 acres north of Wynnton Road and has 160 units. Directly south of Warren Williams is Rivers Homes, 24 units of elderly housing. The largest project is Elizabeth Canty Homes, 266 units on 32 acres between Cusseta Road and Weracoba Creek. About one-third of the 102 units in Farley Homes are within the boundary of census tract 24 along Shepherd Drive.

FIGURE 4
NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



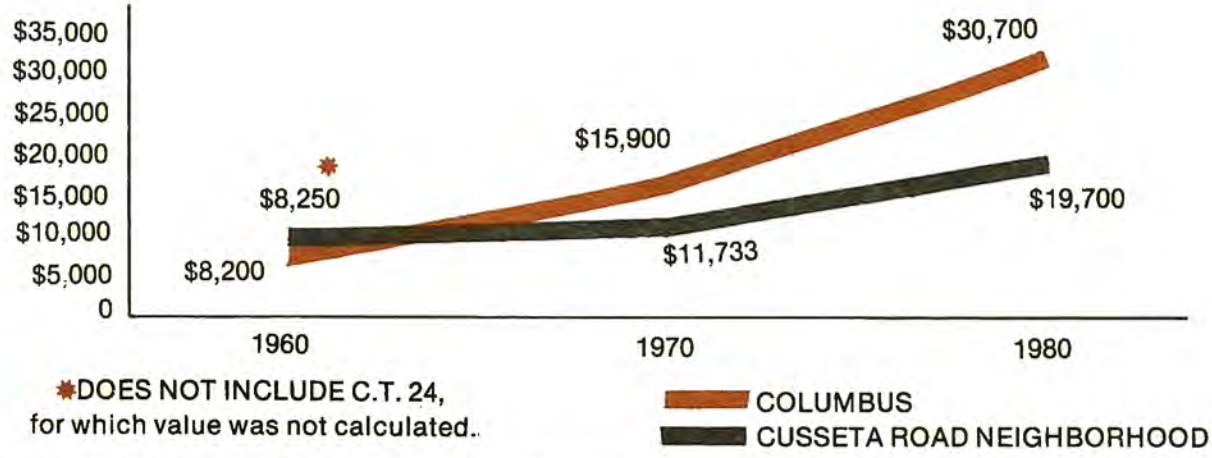
Source: U.S. Census of Population: 1960, 1970, 1980

FIGURE 5
OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS AS PERCENT OF OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



Source: U.S. Census of Population: 1960, 1970, 1980.

FIGURE 6
VALUE OF OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



Source: U.S. Census of Population: 1960, 1970, 1980

These projects were built to provide standard housing for low-income families, particulary those displaced by the urban renewal projects. They account for 20% of the housing units available within the neighborhood, and their residents are about 25% of the total population.

While Housing Authority projects provide needed low-cost housing, their impact on the surrounding area is not wholly beneficial. Many single-family homes between Farley and Warren Williams are equipped with burglar bars on the windows, a precaution supported by crime statistics for areas near public housing projects. However, the presence of the projects is as detrimental to the neighborhood as the actual problems; private housing in close proximity to public units is not perceived as a desirable residential environment. The relative isolation of Warren Williams and Canty Homes has lessened this impact on the surrounding area to some extent but also serves to isolate the residents from the community as a whole.

Census tract 30 has five active mobile home parks. During the late 1960's, the build-up in troop strength at Fort Benning caused a housing shortage in Columbus. Part of the City's attempt to provide sufficient rental housing was to allow mobile homes within south Columbus neighborhoods. There was over-crowding, and many mobile home units were set up in residential yards and lacked frontage on streets. When the number of military personnel decreased in the 1970's, many of the mobile homes were removed; however, four small parks remain and another larger park has been added near Bull Creek. In addition to the mobile home parks still in use, there are a number of abandoned units in the block bounded by Cusseta Road, 28th Avenue, Dawson Street, and 29th Avenue. With the exception of the newer park, mobile home parks in the neighborhood are poorly maintained and are a negative influence on adjacent areas.

The percentage of owner-occupied housing units within the Cusseta Road neighborhood has remained relatively constant over the past twenty years. It has been, and continues to be, well below the percentage for the City as a whole. The large number of rental units has resulted in a transient population. 71% of home owners have lived at the same location for more than ten years; among renters only 33% have resided at the same location for that length of time.

The median value of owner-occupied housing within the neighborhood is only 64% of the median for the city as a whole. In 1970, it was 74% of the city median. This relative decline in the value of housing reflects the age, condition, and modest size of the houses.

The large stock of moderately-priced housing in the Cusseta Road neighborhood is an important asset to Columbus since affordable housing, both for renters and owners, is increasingly difficult to obtain. Some sections of this neighborhood, especially those built in the 1960's, are pleasant and well-kept. However, the perception of the whole is becoming worse, and it is no longer seen as a desirable residential area.

Recommendations

1. Census tracts 27 and 30 should continue as part of the Code Enforcement and Fire Prevention Programs to ensure that all housing units are in standard condition.

2. Census tracts 27 and 30 should be priority areas for low-interest housing improvement loans through the CHIP program.

3. In order to encourage homeownership, the Columbus Housing Authority should assist moderate-income households in obtaining mortgage commitments and should monitor potential sources of assistance.

4. Mortgage loan disclosure data should be monitored to ensure that conventional loans are being made available for rehabilitation and purchase of housing in low-income neighborhoods.

5. Expansion of commercial use into existing residential areas through rezoning should be discouraged.

6. Owners of vacant lots and buildings must assume the responsibility for their maintenance. The city should ensure this maintenance by enforcing ordinances for control of weeds and overgrowth (Sections 13-113 and 13-114) as well for the removal of debris (Section 13-167.7 A and B).

Land Use and Zoning

The Cusseta Road neighborhood is comprised of 1,570 acres developed for residential, commercial and manufacturing uses. As the Existing Land Use Map shows, the area is divided into large sections for manufacturing and for mixed commercial/residential. The percentage of land use acreage is as follows:

26%	Residential
23%	Undeveloped
16%	Commercial
14%	Right of Way
12%	Manufacturing
8%	Public/Quasi-Public
1%	Park

Residential

Residential use is spread through census tracts 24 and 30 and in eastern portion of tract 27. Approximately two-thirds of the land used for residential purposes is developed as single-family housing. The majority of multi-family units are located in the projects of the Columbus Housing Authority and in the Theo McGee Urban Renewal area of tract 24. Mobile homes occupy about 35 acres in tract 30.

Most of the residential land in the neighborhood was developed as low to medium density single-family units, conforming to the R-2 and R-3 classifications in the Zoning Ordinance. However, the zoning for these areas is entirely R-3A, R-4 and A-0, medium to high density residential zones which allow apartments. R-4 and A-0 do not permit the new construction of single-family houses. Mobile home parks are in C-3, M-1 and R-4 zones.

The higher density zoning has led to some construction of apartments and duplexes within the neighborhood. For the most part, the R-4 areas are developed for high density apartments, and a large undeveloped parcel zoned R-4 exists south of Springfield Drive. In view of the declining population within the neighborhood, the goal of adding residents through higher density development appears reasonable. However, zoning undesirable residential locations for this kind of development can only compound current problems.

For the most part, residential zoning and land use coincide in this neighborhood. Some isolated apartment buildings remain in areas west of Brown Avenue which are zoned for manufacturing uses. The land adjacent to these buildings has remained vacant but, as redevelopment proceeds, the quality of their environment may deteriorate.

Commercial

Commercial uses within the neighborhood have developed primarily along the arterial and collector streets.

In census tract 24, commercial uses are generally on the periphery of residential areas and are well main-

tained. Two small neighborhood commercial zones within the residential areas accommodate a YMCA and small grocery store; both serve the needs of the residents in the immediate vicinity. Uses in much of this area are controlled not only by the Zoning Ordinance but also by covenants in the deeds conveyed by the Columbus Housing Authority through the urban renewal program.

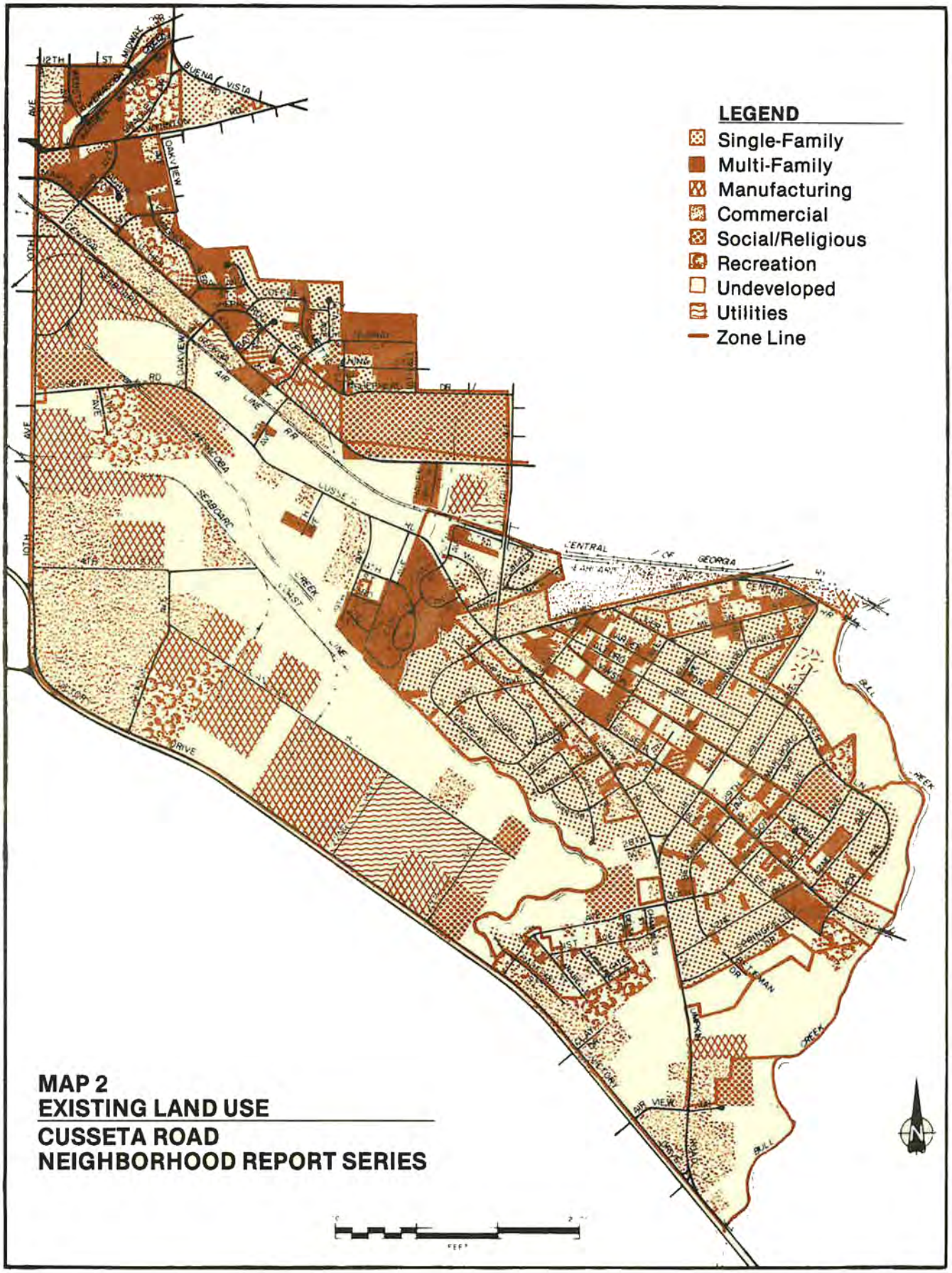
The strip of land between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and the railroad tracks was designated for manufacturing use by the Theo McGee Urban Renewal Plan. Existing uses and an application in 1979 to rezone part of this land to commercial use led to a Planning Division recommendation that the section between 10th Avenue and Shepherd Drive be designated for highway commercial activities. Since that time, two other parcels along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard have been rezoned from manufacturing to commercial. These zoning changes have been compatible with the existing development.

Commercial development along Cusseta and Andrews Roads is the worst blighting influence in the neighborhood. Abandoned commercial buildings are left to deteriorate, uncontrolled outdoor storage remains unscreened from streets and yards, junk yards do not have adequate fencing, and these commercial strips have the look of careless neglect. Such conditions are not only unsightly but also unhealthful, providing breeding places for rats and mosquitoes which plague adjacent residential areas. Businesses which care for their properties are also impacted by the generally negative environment.

Most of the rezonings over the past five years have been from manufacturing to commercial use. Only one case was approved which changed residential to commercial use along North Lumpkin Road. A similar request for the south side of Cusseta Road was turned down because it would have been encroachment into an established residential subdivision. Conditions along the north side of Cusseta Road were cited by opposing residents.

Commercial uses along the north side of Cusseta Road begin at 20th Avenue and form a continuous strip to Bull Creek. The uses include offices and mobile home parks as well as retail and service operations. At one point highway commercial zoning covers an entire block, extending into the residential area along Dawson Street.

The other major commercial development in the neighborhood is along Victory Drive. This area includes a shopping center and several nightclubs. There is also a large undeveloped tract with access from North Lumpkin which is zoned for highway commercial use but is currently used by the city as a park. This tract remains in private ownership and will be developed as zoned at an unspecified time in the future.



MAP 2
EXISTING LAND USE
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES

Industrial

There are almost 600 acres of land zoned for industrial use in the Cusseta Road neighborhood. The majority of this land is within Blanchard Industrial Park and the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area. About 200 acres have been developed for manufacturing, transportation, and wholesale activities.

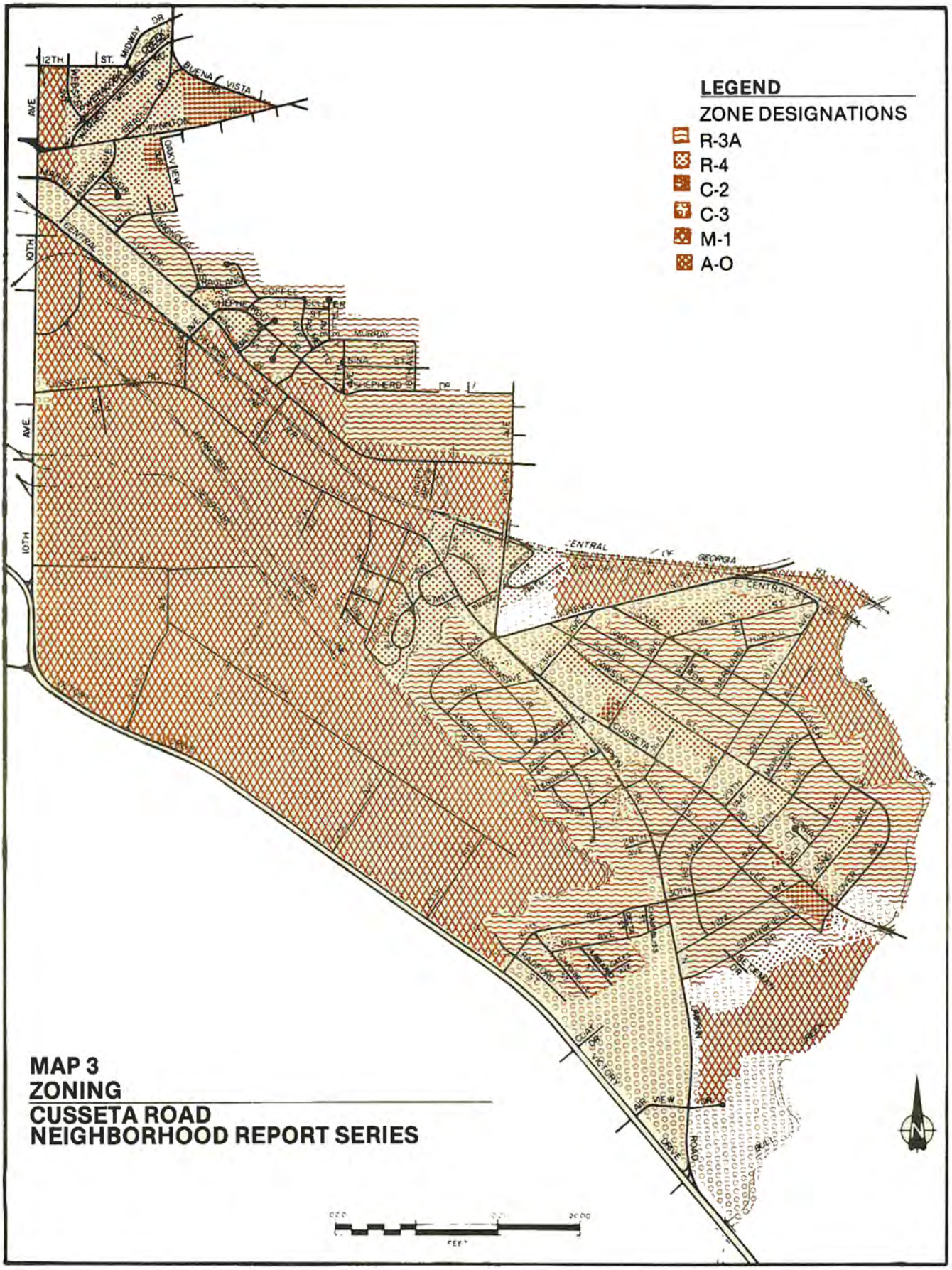
Blanchard Industrial Park was established in 1968 on 200 acres of land which had formerly served as the municipal airport and landfill. Except for some parcels owned by the city, all usable sites in the park have been sold, and companies operating there provide over 1,000 jobs. This area offers access to downtown as well as to rail and highway transportation facilities. It is buffered from the rest of the neighborhood by Weracoba Creek, which runs along its northern and eastern borders.

The Columbus Housing Authority acquired the land in the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area in 1973. Once cleared of substandard housing, the Authority marketed the land for light manufacturing uses. Ten tracts remain in the area, which is the only undeveloped industrial land outside Blanchard Industrial Park with proximity to downtown and rail access. Renewed interest in this land emerged in 1983, and more development is expected to occur during 1984.

Because much of this urban renewal land has remained vacant for so long, some undesirable uses have occured. The network of dirt streets through the area has been used as dump sites because the curb cuts along Cusseta Road still provide easy access. Employees of the City's Public Works Department use the land across the street from their facility as a haphazard parking lot. These practices have a negative impact on the desirability of the area for redevelopment.

Future use of the part of the urban renewal area which abuts Canty Homes is currently undecided. The land is zoned for light manufacturing, but other possibilities are being explored to reduce the impact of new development upon the residents of the housing project. This section and one along 20th Avenue north of Cusseta Road represent potential conflicts between established residential uses and redevelopment activities. Other apartment buildings scattered through the M-1 zoning face the same uncertain future.

The city has had under consideration for many years the construction of a street to link Blanchard Industrial Park with the Weracoba Creek Renewal Area. This extension of 4th Street would give the northern area access to Victory Drive as well as open up land between the renewal area and Weracoba Creek for industrial use. The major obstacle to the construction of this connecting road has been the cost of the bridge needed to span the Creek.


LEGEND
ZONE DESIGNATIONS
R-3A
R-4
C-2
C-3
M-1
A-O
MAP 3
ZONING
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES

Of the 600 acres zoned for industrial use, only 200 acres are used for these activities. Over 100 acres are used for cemeteries and park land. In addition, there are scattered nonconforming residential and commercial uses in all three census tracts. Of the M-1 land which remains undeveloped, much is located in the flood plain of Weracoba Creek and Bull Creek. The most desirable land for industrial development lies between Weracoba Creek and the rail corridor, some within the renewal area and some in private ownership. Although the sites in this area are relatively small, their accessibility and servicability make them attractive for many businesses.

The mixture of residential and industrial use within the Cusseta Road neighborhood has not caused many points of conflict. The areas developed for M-1 uses are generally buffered from the rest of the neighborhood by arterial streets, the rail corridor, or Weracoba Creek. The one use cited by residents as offensive is the meat packing plant on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, adjacent to David School. There are, as noted, tracts zoned for industrial use but currently undeveloped which may cause land use conflicts. These tracts are immediately adjacent to established residential areas, and their development for industrial activities could have a negative impact on the community.

Employment

There are about 6,000 people employed within the Cusseta Road neighborhood. The largest employer is Lummus Industries with over 1,000 jobs. The other major employers are the industrial operations in Blanchard Industrial Park.

The major places of employment are located along arterial streets or within the industrial park. Three-fourths of the jobs are located in census tract 27. The number of jobs in this area is expected to grow as land in the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area is redeveloped.

Recommendations

1. Bragg-Smith/Liberty Street area should be rezoned from R-4 to R-3A because it is not a desirable location for high density residential redevelopment.

2. The M-1 areas between Springfield Drive and Victory Drive and between Clover Lane and Bull Creek should be rezoned for residential use to prevent conflicts with adjacent properties zoned and used for residential purposes.

3. Housing which exists as non-conforming uses in M-1 zones should not be allowed to expand.

4. Commercial activities should be required to screen all outside storage.

5. The meat processing plant on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard should be assisted in finding a location away from residences, schools and parks.

6. An extension of Fourth Street connecting Blanchard Industrial Park with the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area should be constructed to provide better access for industrial development.

7. Unauthorized use of undeveloped land in Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area should be discouraged by closing curb cuts along Cusseta Road.

Transportation

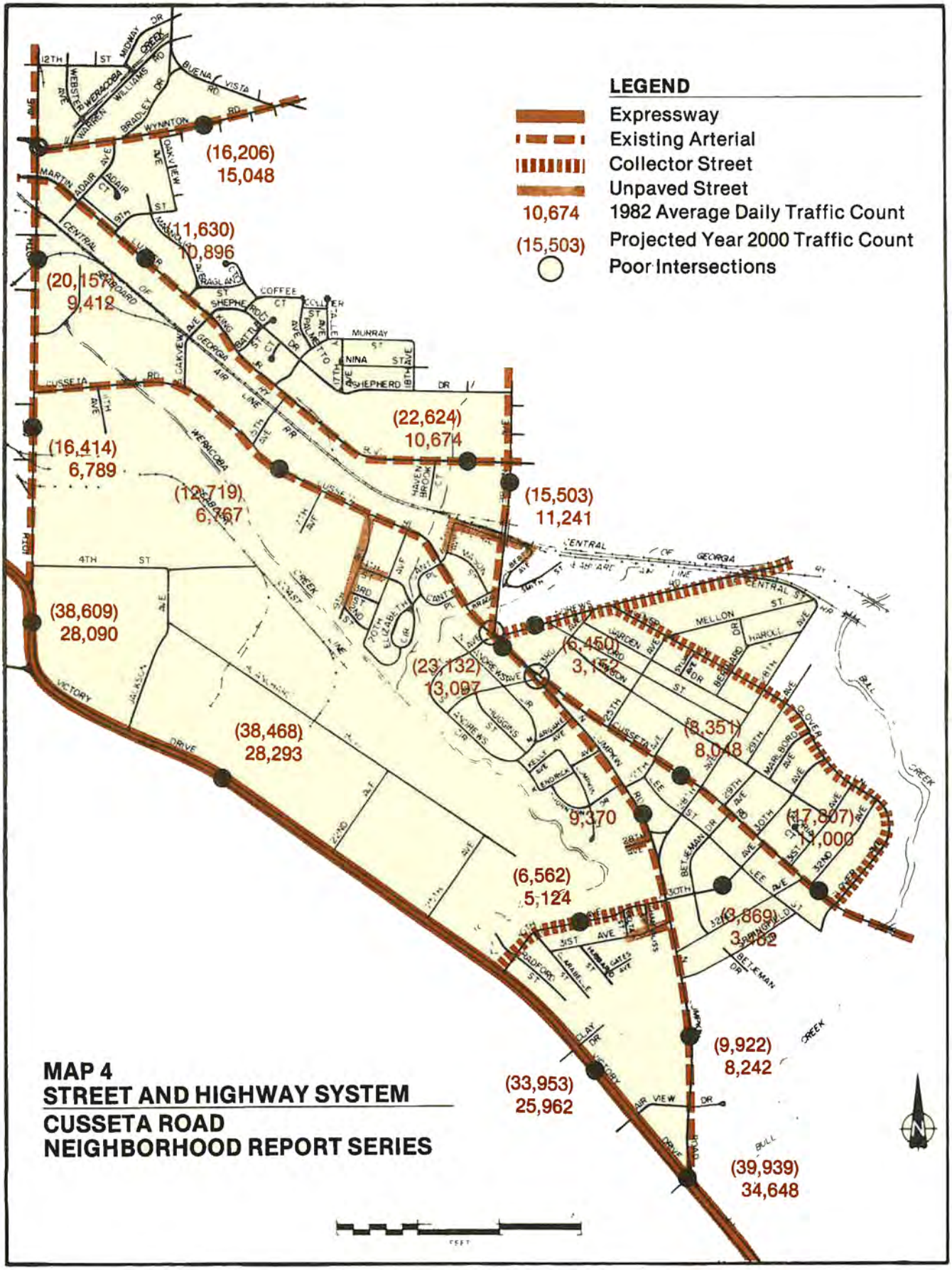
Street System

The street system in the Cusseta Road neighborhood contains several major elements of the city-wide street and highway network. Victory Drive, the major throughfare between Columbus and Fort Benning, forms the southern boundary of the area. Arterial streets which pass through the neghborhood are Cusseta Road, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Brown Avenue, Wynnton Road, North Lumpkin Road, and 10th Avenue. Andrews Road, Clover Lane and 30th Avenue serve as collector streets.

The *Year 2000 Transportation Plan* proposes no major additions or changes to the present configuration of streets. Projects listed for this neighborhood include improvements to intersections and railroad crossings and upgrading Cusseta Road to four lanes. Of particular concern are two intersections along Cusseta Road within 700 feet of each other: that with Brown Avenue, Andrews Road and 21st Avenue and that with North Lumpkin Road and 23rd Avenue. Both involve the convergence of two arterials at less than 90° angles and are further complicated by the intersection of other streets at the same point. Both intersections are included in the Transportation Improvement Program for 1985-1989.

Substantial changes to the street system in this neighborhood have been accomplished over the past 20 years. Columbus's first urban renewal program, Theo McGee, provided the opportunity to eliminate a network of narrow dirt streets and to replat the area along a new street system. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard was reconstructed as a four-lane arterial as part of the same program. The second urban renewal plan, Weracoba Creek, eliminated many local streets between 10th and 20th Avenues and led to improvements in the western section of Cusseta Road. A network of abandoned streets remains in part of this renewal area. Perhaps the most visible change was the reconstruction of Victory Drive from two to six lanes with a median. In early 1984, the merchants along this expressway contributed to its improvement by planting the median with 450 crepe myrtle trees.

One major transportation problem which affects the northwestern corner of the neighborhood is the underpass at 10th Avenue and Wynnton Road under the railroad yards. The underpass is narrow, and its condition is deteriorating. As Wynnton/Macon Road is the major connection between downtown and I-185, traffic operations at this point are critical. A variety of solutions to the problem have been proposed, from relocating the railroad yards to construction of another east-west corridor. In 1977, the *Street and Highway Plan* proposed the construction of a four-lane viaduct to replace the underpass and tie both Wynnton Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard into 10th Street. The cost of this project has been


LEGEND
Expressway
Existing Arterial
Collector Street
Unpaved Street
10,674 1982 Average Daily Traffic Count
(15,503) Projected Year 2000 Traffic Count
Poor Intersections
(16,206)
15,048
(11,630)
10,896
(20,157)
9,412
(22,624)
10,674
(16,414)
6,789
(12,719)
6,367
(15,503)
11,241
(38,609)
28,090
(23,132)
13,097
(38,468)
28,293
(8,351)
8,048
9,370
(17,807)
(6,562)
5,124
(9,922)
8,242
(33,953)
25,962
(39,939)
34,648
MAP 4
STREET AND HIGHWAY SYSTEM
CUSSETA ROAD
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES

prohibitive. If the momentum of downtown revitalization continues, the need for improvement at this location will become more pressing.

The pattern of arterial streets passing through the neighborhood, in combination with the streams and railroad tracks, separates the neighborhood into many small sections. Heavy traffic volumes and strip commercial development along these streets are divisive elements. Pockets of housing exist between the arterials, relatively isolated from the rest of the neighborhood. Canty Homes is encircled by a stream, Cusseta Road, and cleared urban renewal land; the Bragg Smith-Liberty Street area is cut off by the railroad tracks, a bridge carrying Brown Avenue, and a stream; Kendrick Quarters is between Weracoba Creek and the convergence of North Lumpkin Road and Victory Drive; Andrews Woods lies between Weracoba Creek, North Lumpkin Road and a stream on the west; and so on. Each of these areas has its own separate identity and has little opportunity for a broader neighborhood perspective.

There are several dirt streets in the neighborhood: Chambliss Street, 28th and 31st Avenues south of North Lumpkin Road, Central Street, and 20th Avenue between Mason and Central Streets. All of these local streets serve residences. Both Chambliss Street and 31st Avenue are scheduled for paving in 1984.

Railroad

Southern Railway and Seaboard Coast Line both have main line tracks through the Cusseta Road neighborhood. These tracks run through the corridor between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Cusseta Road and carry about ten trains per day. In addition, there is a spur track which serves Blanchard Industrial Park.

Both railroads have marshalling yards immediately to the west of 10th Avenue. The presence of the yards limits access to 10th Avenue from the west by interrupting the street pattern and by blocking with unscheduled yard movements those streets which do cross through. The problem of access to downtown via Wynnton Road has been discussed in the previous section. Along the section of 10th Avenue between Wynnton Road and Victory Drive there are four crossings, the two major ones being the main lines from the southern end of Southern's yard and from the northern end of Seaboard's.

Within the neighborhood there are three railroad/highway intersections at Oakview Avenue, 15th Avenue, and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. At Oakview and 15th Avenues, there are ten train crossings each day. The crossing at Oakview is scheduled for the installation of signals and gates in Fiscal Year 1985. The crossing on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard has only one train per day, and the train averages only three cars.

The major problem with the railroad through the neighborhood occurs on the strip of land which lies between the tracks and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the north and Cusseta Road on the south. This land is appropriately zoned for commercial and manufacturing uses between 10th and 20th Avenues; however, 13 apartment buildings currently occupy a part of the strip. Between 20th and Brown Avenues the tracks pass directly behind the Liberty-Bragg Smith residential area. East of Brown Avenue, land uses are compatible with a rail corridor.

Transit

The Cusseta Road neighborhood is well served by public transportation. Four bus routes cover the area south of Wynnton Road, and three more cover the area to the north. Running along the collector and arterial streets, the routes serve all the neighborhood's community facilities.

Adequate transit service is essential to the residents of this area because 1,133 households, one-third of the neighborhood, have no automobile. In census tract 24, more than one-half of the residents are dependent upon METRA for their transportation.

Pedestrian

The Cusseta Road neighborhood has very few sidewalks except in the redevelopment area north of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and in the projects of the Columbus Housing Authority. Clover Lane and 30th Avenue have continuous sidewalks; Brown Avenue, Cusseta Road, and North Lumpkin Road all have sections with sidewalks. Of the local streets only Dawson Street has sidewalks for a short stretch leading to Winterfield School. All the community facilities within the neighborhood have access by sidewalk except Davis School and Woodland-Haygood Park and Community Center.

Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and 30th Avenue are the only two major streets in the neighborhood with adequate pedestrian crossing facilities. The only crosswalk along Cusseta Road between 10th Avenue and Bull Creek is at 30th Avenue.

Recommendations

1. At-grade railroad crossings should be improved to provide for safe and smooth traffic flow at Oakview and 15th Avenues and at all four locations along 10th Avenue between Wynnton Road and Victory Drive.
2. Central Street, 28th Avenue south of North Lumpkin Road, and 20th Avenue between Mason and Central Streets should be paved.
3. A current level of transit service should be maintained.

4. Cusseta Road should be upgraded to a four-lane facility of standard width with turn lanes at 30th Avenue and Clover Lane.

5. The intersections of Cusseta Road with Brown Avenue, Andrews Road, and North Lumpkin Road should receive new traffic signals and adequate signage. Pedestrian crosswalks should be added.

6. Curb cuts for vacated streets in the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area should be closed.

7. Local and collector streets should receive adequate maintenance: resurfacing, repair of potholes and curbs.

8. Sidewalks should be provided on Shepherd Drive at Davis School and on Cusseta Road between Canty Homes and the intersection of Brown Avenue.

9. A pedestrian crosswalk and warning sign should be placed in front of Canty Homes on Cusseta Road.

Recreation and Open Space

The Cusseta Road neighborhood has 30 acres of land developed for park use. The land is scattered through five parks which range in size from two to ten acres.

Theo McGee Park is located along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard between 9th and Ragland Streets. Although it functions as a neighborhood park, its 4.1-acre facility is below standard size. The park has basketball courts, a playground and a lighted playfield with bleachers. It is adjacent to the A. J. McClung YMCA, which has a gym and pool. This park is well-kept and heavily used.

Woodland/Haygood Park is a 10-acre facility at 11th Avenue and Cusseta Road. Located within the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area, the park, which once served a densely populated area and an active Manley Taylor School, is now isolated in the middle of industrial development. The adjacent school building is used by the City's Public Works Department, and the parking lot serves their employees. The pool has been filled in, and the bathhouse locked up. Light standards remain on a baseball field which lacks a backstop and has not been maintained. The pleasant, tree-shaded picnic area appears to be maintained and shows signs of occassional use. The gym and community center are used for senior citizen and after-school activities.

Kendrick Quarters Park is a neighborhood park located on about 6.8 acres of land at the end of Hubbard Street. It is basically a large open field which has a basketball court, playground equipment, two baseball backstops, and a set of bleachers. The land is used by the City under an informal agreement with the property owner; in exchange for its use, the City is to maintain this area and its immediate surroundings. The property is zoned for highway commercial uses, and the owner plans to develop the area at some time in the future. Because it is not a permanent facility, this park receives little attention. It is a popular neighborhood recreation area, especially during baseball season.

Elizabeth Canty Park is located on 5.5 acres within Canty Homes. The park has a multi-purpose court, a metal swing support without swings, and swimming pool. During 1983 the pool was closed, and its future remains in question. The entire area has little grass and no trees. Canty Homes also has a community center which serves as a nutrition center for congregate meals and as a meeting place for the senior citizen club.

Warren Williams Park is a 2-acre mini-park associated with Warren Williams Homes. It contains a collection of dilapidated play equipment and has a community center. Although the park abuts heavily-travelled Wynnton Road, it is well buffered by mature plantings.

The *Fifteen Year Recreation Plan* proposes that three school facilities

within the neighborhood be improved so that they serve as parks during times when school is not in session. The present agreement with the Muscogee County School District permits use of outdoor recreational facilities when not in use by the individual schools.

Roberts Center for Student Services (formerly Brown Avenue School) is on 10 acres at the intersection of Brown Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. This property is separated from the playfields of the two active schools to the west by a wooded area along a small stream. The *Recreation Plan* recommends that the area be developed for tennis, baseball, and playground activities.

Thirtieth Avenue School, on 30th Avenue south of North Lumpkin Road, has a 6-acre site which is well buffered from any adjacent activities. The *Recreation Plan* proposes the utilization of the existing playground, playfield, and court, with the addition of tennis courts.

Winterfield School, at 30th Avenue and Dawson Street, is located on 5.5 acres in a section of the neighborhood which has no developed park facilities. It is proposed that the existing layout and equipment be upgraded and used for a neighborhood park.

In addition to the open space offered by the parks and school sites, the Recreation Department sponsors four senior citizens clubs which participate in city-wide recreation and social events. Three of the clubs use Housing Authority facilities, and the fourth meets at Woodland/Haygood Community Center. South Columbus Senior Citizen Center is located just to the east of the neighborhood, and residents can participate in the programs offered there.

The neighborhood also houses the A.J. McClung YMCA, the Garrard Girls Club, and the South Columbus Boys Club. The YMCA has a gym, a weight room, exercise classes, and an outdoor pool, all of which are available to members. It offers special rates for neighborhood children who want to get involved with team sports.

The Girls Club is located on Clover Lane opposite Winterfield School. It offers to girls between the ages of 6 to 16 a variety of programs in physical education, arts and crafts, homemaking, and counseling. The membership fee is $3.00 per year but can be waived for girls who cannot pay. The club is open after school in the winter and all day during the summer. About 85 girls participate in this branch of the Girls Club.

The South Columbus Boys Club serves about 650 boys between the ages of 6 and 16. The club is located at Cusseta Road and Clover Lane and offers an outdoor swimming pool, gym, arts and crafts, and organized

team sports. The membership fee for the club is $5.00 per year; boys may work at the club to earn money to pay the fee.

In addition to developed facilities for recreation and open space, the residents of the neighborhood have available undeveloped land along Weracoba Creek and Bull Creek. However, in census tract 30, the lack for space for recreation has created conflicts as residents use front yards and streets for a variety of games and sports. Older residents, in particular, complain of noise, trespassing, litter, and lack of accessibility to their property.

The Cusseta Road neighborhood has approximately 4 acres of land per 1,000 population developed for recreation and parks. The national standard is 10 acres per 1,000. Existing parks are small and poorly located in relation to population centers within the area. The development and use of the three school sites as recommended in the *Recreation Plan* would increase the amount to about 6 acres per thousand. It would also make park facilities available to sections of the neighborhood which currently have very poor access.

Recommendations

1. Woodland/Haygood Park should be redeveloped as a fitness center to attract the downtown workforce during lunch and after work. Tennis, racketball, track, and exercise facilities should be added, and the picnic area retained.
2. Kendrick Quarters Park should be purchased by the City in order to retain this needed recreation space and to buffer the existing residential area from future highway commercial development.
3. Elizabeth Canty Park should be substantially rehabilitated and landscaped. The pool should be reopened with increased security.
4. The play equipment in Warren Williams Park should be rehabilitated or replaced.
5. The three school sites proposed for parks in the *Fifteen Year Recreation Plan* should be developed for this use.
6. The City should consider acquisition of acreage sufficient for one or two neighborhood parks from the undeveloped tracts adjacent to Bull Creek.

Community Facilities

Schools

The Cusseta Road neighborhood has five schools, all of which are used by programs of the Muscogee County School District. In addition, the main offices for the District are located in the northern section of the neighborhood.

* Winterfield Elementary School occupies the block bounded by 30th and 31st Avenues, Dawson Street, and Clover Lane. Built in 1951, the school has had several additions and currently needs a new kitchen. It serves grades K-6.

* Thirtenth Avenue Elementary School, built in 1960, is located on 30th Avenue just south of North Lumpkin Road. This is one of the School District facilities being considered for closing, in part because its average daily attendance is too small to qualify for state aid for needed renovation. It is, however, scheduled to continue serving grades K-6 through 1985.

* Davis Elementary School on Shepherd Drive is part of an educational campus which includes Marshall Junior High and Roberts Center for Student Services. The school serves grades K-6 and has ample playground space. It has been added to several times since its construction in 1951 and is being modified and renovated during the 1983-1984 school year.

* Marshall Junior High School is adjacent to Davis Elementary on Shepherd Drive. Its 18-acre site provides off-street parking and a large area developed as athletic fields. Built in 1952, the school requires some repairs but is expected to continue serving grades 7-9.

* Roberts Center for Student Services at the intersection of Brown Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard occupies the building which was used for Brown Avenue Elementary School. The School District uses this facility for a variety of administrative functions.

Police Protection

Police protection is provided by a schedule of two to three patrol units per shift. With about 4.5% of the population of Columbus, this neighborhood has about 4.5% of the crime. Statistics indicate that larceny, burglary, and disturbances are the most common offenses.

Residents report an increasing incidence of disturbances and trepass in census tract 30. Many fear retaliation if police are called. The Community Relations Division of the Police Department is available to work with residents in areas where there are chronic problems and to make patrol units aware of these problems.

Utilities

The Cusseta Road neighborhood is completely served by public water and sewer. The Water Works identifies no problems in this part of the city. The area receives utility service from Georgia Power, Southern Bell and the Gas Light Company of Columbus.

Fire Protection

Fire protection for most of the neighborhood is provided from Fire Station No. 7, which is located on North Lumpkin Road east of Cusseta Road. Some areas are served by Fire Station No. 6 on Britt Avenue to the north of the neighborhood.

The Cusseta Road neighborhood is being inspected this year as part of the Department of Community Development's Fire Prevention Program. Each housing unit within the area is visited, and residents are given literature on home safety. Houses are inspected for fire hazards and instruction given for correction of unsafe conditions.

Cultural Facilities

* The W.C. Bradley Memorial Library at 1201 Bradley Drive is the main library for the city. The library contains genealogical and reference sections as well as a large lending library. There are also free films shown twice a week.
* The Columbus Museum of Arts and Sciences at 1251 Wynnton Road contains collections of cultural memorabilia of the area and hosts special shows and exhibits throughout the year. The grounds of the museum are open to the public and are beautifully landscaped with a wide variety of trees and flowers. Admission to to the museum is free.

Recommendations

1. School grounds throughout the neighborhood should be available for community recreation during the hours when school is not in session.
2. The Police Department should work with residents to resolve the problems of disturbance and harassment in the neighborhood.
3. The site of Davis and Marshall School should be landscaped to provide better separation from Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and to give shade to the elementary school playground.

Natural Environment

The Cusseta Road neighborhood is situated on a flat low-lying area north and east of the Chattahoochee River. The area is traversed by Weracoba Creek, Bull Creek and West Double Branches Creek. A significant portion of the neighborhood lies in the flood plain of these creeks. Sections along all three have been identified as problems in the *Drainage Problem Categorization Study.*

As part of the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Plan, improvements were made to the creek channel. The changes have reduced the amount and frequency of flooding. The Columbus Housing Authority has made improvements in the portion of Weracoba Creek north of Wynnton Road as it passes through Warren Williams Homes and in West Double Branches Creek as it passes through Canty Homes.

Much of the land which lies within the flood plain is developed for industrial uses. Some of the land, especially that along Bull Creek, remains undeveloped. Zoned for commercial, residential and manufacturing uses, any development will have to meet the requirements of the Flood Plain Ordinance.

Minor flooding problems occur in some sections of the neighborhood with every heavy rain. Residents in the Kendrick Quarters section west of 30th Avenue and in the Bragg Smith Street area complain of poor drainage. Elsewhere, clogged storm sewers cause periodic problems.

One of the assets of this neighborhood is the abundance of large trees which provide shade and add beauty to the environment. The trees have reached an age where they need some maintenance, especially those on public right-of-way. Falling limbs and street lights obscured by summer foliage are concerns for residents of the area. In some places, street signs are hidden and sight distance impaired by overgrown vegetation.

Recommendations

1. Correction of conditions identified by the *Drainage Problem Categorization Study* which remain unresolved should be scheduled and implemented in a systematic manner.

2. The city should consider the purchase of undeveloped land in the Bull Creek flood plain for development as a park.

3. A tree planting plan and program should be developed to provide a comprehensive approach to the maintenance and replacement of trees on public property.

Summary

Previous Plans

The Cusseta Road neighborhood is within the Central Columbus Planning Sector, as designated in the *Land Use Plan for Columbus, Georgia,* published in 1977. The plan recommends neighborhood preservation activities to stabilize and improve existing housing throughout the area. The redevelopment of the Kendrick Quarters section for expanded industrial activity is recommended due to the poor condition of residential development. In terms of general policy, this report concurs with the broad recommendations of the *Land Use Plan.* However, the expansion of strip commercial development along Cusseta Road and the elimination of a residential community without firm commitments for activity to replace the existing use are specific points of conflict with the earlier plan.

Neighborhood analyses were done for the area in 1968 and 1980. *Neighborhood Analyses,* the 1968 report prepared by Barbour-Cooper and Associates, Inc., used the same study boundaries as this report. The findings for the area included the presence of a large number of substandard housing units, flooding conditions, unattractive commercial areas, and new residential construction too close to the railroad tracks. The recommended renewal treatment for census tract 24 was conservation of existing use. For tract 27, the report recommended clearance with development for industrial use to the west and replacement of residential use in the southeast. For tract 30, it proposed code enforcement and rehabilitation to improve existing residential areas.

The *Cusseta Road/North Lumpkin Road Area Neighborhood Analysis,* prepared by Candeub, Flessig and Associates in 1980, covered census tract 30, the eastern portion of tract 27, and part of tract 28. The major change in neighborhood conditions in the twelve years separating the two reports was a substantial improvement in housing conditions. The number of housing units, particularly mobile homes, had decreased, and the quality of the entire residential environment had improved. Recommended treatment of the issues identified in the 1980 analysis included intensive activity to rehabilitate the Kendricks Quarters area, definition of boundaries for commercial development, designation of a "neighborhood strategy area" to conserve and improve stable residential areas, and acquisition of additional park land.

Changes in Neighborhood Conditions, 1980-1984

There have been no major changes in the Cusseta Road neighborhood over the past five years. The problems identified in this report have been present for many years. The difference between 1980 and the present is that the gradual deterioration of the residential en-

vironment, particularly in census tract 30, has rendered the area undesirable for further investment by current or potential residents. Data from the 1980 Census substantiate the visual impression that the neighborhood is falling further behind the city in all economic measures.

A Code Enforcement Program was carried out in this area in 1981. Every housing unit was inspected, and substandard housing was either brought up to minimal standards for habitation or was demolished. Some deteriorated housing was removed; other units were boarded up. During 1983-1984, a Fire Prevention Program is again inspecting each inhabited unit, ensuring correction of fire hazards and reporting major building code violations to the City's Inspection Division. Both programs have been important in slowing the decline of the area.

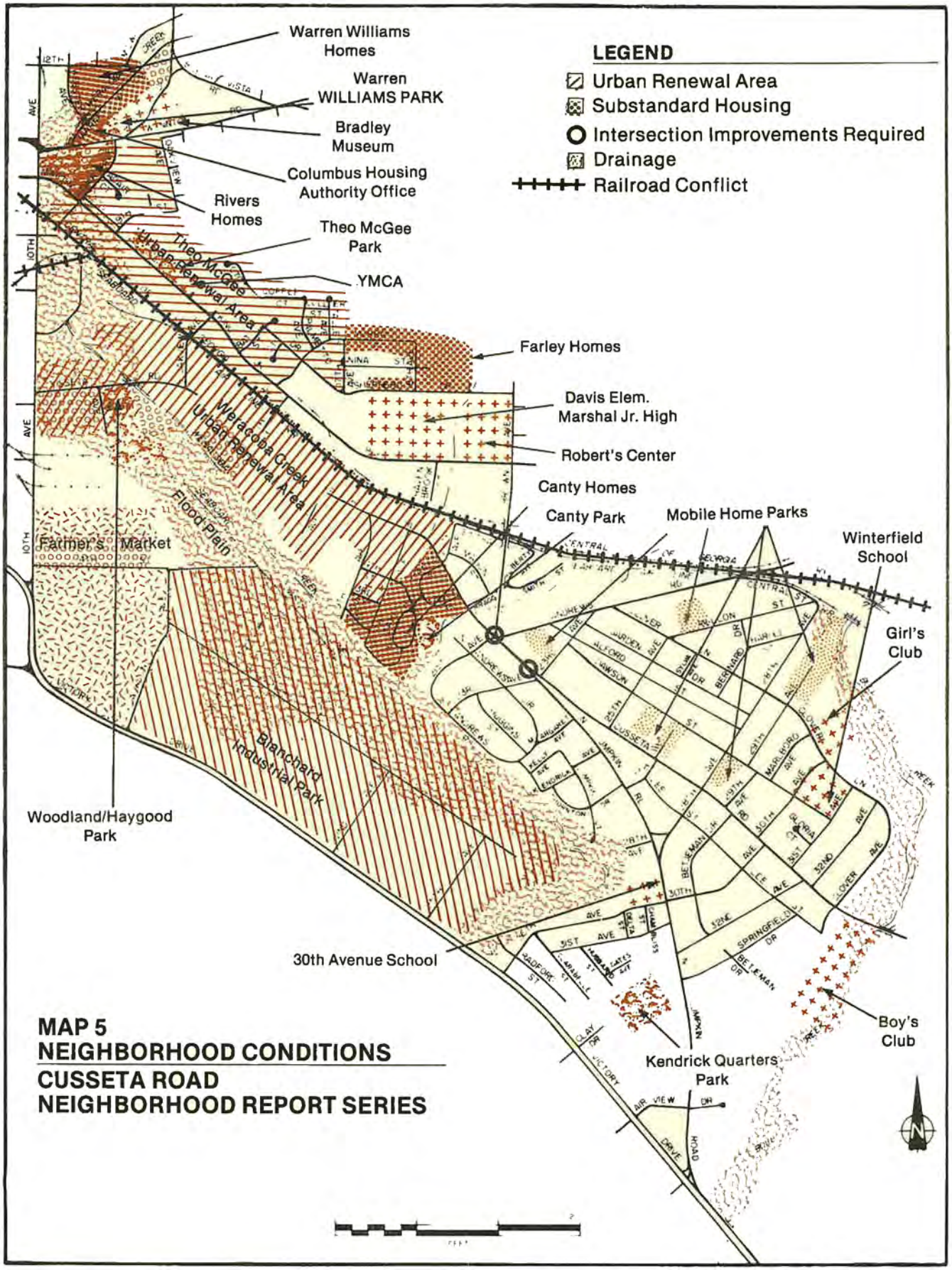
In 1980, a group of residents concerned with the quality of the neighborhood formed an organization which had as its goal the improvement of the overall environment. Working with representatives of the city, they inspected the neighborhood and identified specific problems areas. After several years, the group disbanded because they could not bring about any major changes to improve living conditions. The problems which motivated their action and frustrated their intention remain much the same.

Within the industrial areas of the neighborhood, there has been increased development activity. The usable land in Blanchard Industrial Park has been absorbed, and the land in the Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area has attracted several new businesses. The City has established their facilities for the Public Works and Sanitation Departments in the western portion of the renewal area.

Treatment

In the past, portions of the Cusseta Road neighborhood have received substantial public assistance through the urban renewal projects of the Columbus Housing Authority. These areas are currently in good condition and do not require major public intervention. The portion of the neighborhood east of 20th Avenue, which appeared relatively stable until the 1970's, is now obviously in decline and requires a concentrated program if further deterioration is to be prevented.

This part of the neighborhood needs, as the first priority, a campaign to clean up the physical environment. The city has in place ordinances which, if consistently enforced, would improve both appearance and living conditions in the area by removing junk and debris, controlling outside commercial storage, and clearing vacant lots of overgrowth where rats and snakes breed. Adequate maintenance of public property, whether in streets or


LEGEND
Urban Renewal Area
Substandard Housing
Intersection Improvements Required
Drainage
Railroad Conflict
Warren Williams Homes
Warren WILLIAMS PARK
Bradley Museum
Columbus Housing Authority Office
Rivers Homes
Theo McGee Park
YMCA
Theo McGee Urban Renewal Area
Farley Homes
Davis Elem. Marshal Jr. High
Robert's Center
Canty Homes
Canty Park
Mobile Home Parks
Winterfield School
Girl's Club
Weracoba Creek Urban Renewal Area
Flood Plain
Farmer's Market
Blanchard Industrial Park
Woodland/Haygood Park
30th Avenue School
Kendrick Quarters Park
Boy's Club
MAP 5
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right-of-way or individual parcels, would also improve the neighborhood. The general clean-up should be coordinated with rehabilitation loans for residential and commercial buildings as well as mortgage assistance to increase the level of owner investment.

Conditions in the neighborhood are a disservice to the residents, many of whom have invested their time and effort in trying to improve the quality of their community. In addition, the continuing deterioration of the area discourages investment in either new purchases or rehabilitation. Without a highly visible program to improve the neighborhood, the downward course will not change.

The creation of a target area for existing programs within the Cusseta Road neighborhood would focus both public and private attention on this area. With its large stock of housing units and its convenient location in relation to schools and employment, this part of Columbus has the potential of becoming a healthy neighborhood once again.